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Little Saint Sunshine



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*Her golden hair blowing from under
a great straw hat*

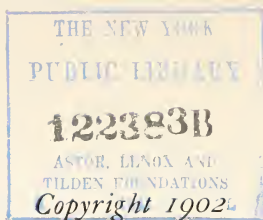
Little Saint Sunshine

By
Charles Frederic Goss

The Illustrations by
Virginia Keep

Indianapolis
The Bobbs-Merrill Company
Publishers

514023



The Bowen-Merrill Company

October

813

G-69 L

PRESS OF
BRAUNWORTH & CO.
BOOKBINDERS AND PRINTERS
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

Little Saint Sunshine

41 X48 3



Little Saint Sunshine

I

THE Beardsleys lived in a little cottage a block or two back from the Norwood car line.

Mrs. Beardsley had found the plan for it in a magazine devoted to architecture; and it certainly was a gem. The tiny structure of a single story was completely enveloped in woodbine, clematis and morning-glories. In front of it was a beautiful green lawn, which Mr. Beardsley mowed before breakfast and after supper. In the center of this lawn there

was a little girl, who not only had the hearts of Papa and Mama Beardsley in her "vest pocket," as the saying is, but those of all the other people on the street.

There was old Sanderson, the drayman, for example. He was silent, hard and cold by nature. Once upon a time, he had been arrested by the Humane Society for cruelty to his own horse; and no boy in that whole neighborhood had ever ventured to steal a ride on his cart since that memorable day when he had cut a hole with his whip in the jacket of little Tommy Dickson. But one day, as he drove out of the yard, there by his gate stood Dolly Beardsley in a snow-white dress, her golden hair blowing from under a great straw hat, her hands clasped behind her back, one little foot set out before the other, and a smile on her face that would almost bring the angels down from Heaven.

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“Mither Thanderthon,” she said, raising those blue eyes coquettishly, “I gueth I’ll ride to the corner.”

At first, old Sanderson looked as if he were going to try his whip on her. But the next instant, something that nature probably intended for a smile appeared on his grizzled countenance, and lifting her up, he put her on the seat by his side and drove grimly down the street.

The case of McCarthy offered another illustration. He was the boss in a big iron mill. He weighed two hundred pounds, and was always in a “grouch.” When he came home at night, all covered with sand and soot, the other children of the block fled in every direction, but Dolly had yet to learn the meaning of the word fear.

“Good evening, Mither McCarthy,” she said.

“Hey!” he answered, with a noise

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like a piece of boiler-iron struck with a hammer, and looked down over his stomach at the little midget at his feet.

“Good evening. Ith a nithe day,” Dolly said, putting her head over on one side like a little bird.

“Humph! yes! Mebbe it is!” he grunted.

This was all he said at the first salutation; but one night when there was no one else in sight, he gave her a stick of “hoarhound” candy such as he used to buy at the village store when he was no bigger than she.

This was regarded by the other children as a deed no less wonderful than those recorded in the Arabian Nights or in Alice in Wonderland.

The truth of the matter is, that Dolly was born for conquest. She was beautiful; she was bright; she was loving. To be all this and to be three years old and

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a girl is to be irresistible. One evening, Mama Beardsley had finished her preparations for supper and was sitting on the porch waiting for her husband to come home from the store. She watched the little fairy playing on the lawn, with one of those rapturous expressions on her face which Carlo Dolce, Raphael and Murillo tried to paint on the countenances of their Virgin Mothers.

We shall believe in God and Heaven as long as this divine expression is to be seen on the faces of mothers, I think.

There was a vacant lot next door, and through an opening in the fence the little maiden climbed, flitting hither and thither like the bees, the birds and the butterflies. It was dandelion season. The golden earth-stars were shining in wasteful profusion.

If there is anything in the world more beautiful than a little three-year-old girl

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up to her waist in green grass, her hair floating in the breeze and her arms full of dandelions, it would be worth seeing. William Beardsley did not believe there was. When he came home that night, Dolly, whom he called his "Little Saint Sunshine," bounded toward him with her arms full of the yellow flowers, nestled into his open arms, kissed him, pushed back his chin, held a great blossom under it and said: "Let me thee if you love buttah?" After this question had been decided in the affirmative, she looked at him very solemnly and asked: "Papa Beardthley, if I wath a dandelion, would you pick me the firth one in the meadow?"

"The first one in a million; ten million; a hundred million!" said Beardsley ardently.

Mama Beardsley overheard this romantic conversation between the two

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lovers, and being a high school graduate and a little given to making rhymes, she sat up late that night and composed the following verses :

*With a bunch of flowers in her dimpled hand,
On his knee sat his sweet little scion.
“Would you pick me firth of all,” she lisped,
“If I wath a dandelion?”
He folded her close to his loving heart;
Then kissed her lips and said, “Oh,
I would pick you first of a million flowers
In a thousand-acre meadow.”*

And Beardsley actually thought it was *poetry!*

Do not for a moment imagine that Little Saint Sunshine was an impeccable angel. She was human, intensely and bewitchingly human. It was as natural for her to be in mischief as for a kitten to tangle a ball of yarn. If you had asked her what one thing there was most

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of in the whole world, she would have answered : "Don'ts."

Mama Beardsley had cherished many theories about rearing children, and one of them was, that she would never say "don't." But being a realist as well as an idealist, when Dolly came, she took her as she was, and did what she had to do.

The ingenuity of the little mischief baffled her mother many times a day. "What will you do next!" she often exclaimed, sometimes in despair, sometimes in amazement, and sometimes in amusement.

There was a loud crash in the bedroom one morning just as she was taking the bread from the oven, and rushing toward the scene of disaster, she saw Dolly standing in front of the wash-stand in a pool of water and her beautiful

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china wash-bowl lying in fragments on the floor. The child was wet from top to toe, and turning her bedraggled little person toward her mother she shrugged her shoulders and spread out the palms of her tiny hands, *a l'Italienne*, rolled up those irresistible blue eyes and said, as nearly like her mother as an echo, "What me do nexth?"

"It was worth the price of the bowl," said Mrs. Beardsley, when she told her husband about it that night.

They were religious people—the Beardsleys, good, stanch Presbyterians, and there was a little chapel round the corner in which, in spite of his youth, Beardsley was an elder and the superintendent of the Sunday-school. He had begun life with a desire to preach, but poverty had thwarted his plans. Nothing, however, could prevent him from

being a theologian, nor from transmitting this moral bias to his daughter Dolly.

She had a little system of theology all her own. It was not perfectly logical nor absolutely Calvinistic ; but it did the business day by day and grew with the passing years.

Mrs. Beardsley undertook the education of the little mind, but she instinctively left that of the soul to Beardsley. She felt that he outranked her there—that fine, manly fellow in whose veins ran the blood of both Huguenot and Puritan martyrs.

It was a wonderful sight to see him take Dolly on his knee of a Sunday afternoon and teach her to recite the twenty-third Psalm and hear him tell her about the Christ Child and the Heavenly Father. She used to pose him with hard questions now and then, and he

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always admitted it. To hear Beardsley say: "I do not know, my little girl," possessed an educational value not inferior, I believe, to some of those great lectures delivered by Schleiermacher, Harnack or Ritschl.

One day when Little Saint Sunshine was just four years old, Beardsley had been telling her, as best he could, how the good God made and takes care of the world.

"I know all about that," said little Miss Dolly with sublime assurance. "He jeth made it out of nothing." And thereupon she described the process by motions like those of her mother kneading bread or old Stevenson, the carpenter, making a screen door, all the time talking at the top of her speed. "He made the world and He made the thky; but I'd think Dod would get tired holding up that thky. I'd feel better about

it if He would put thome corner poths under it.'"

It was natural that with her temperament, she should take a great interest in anniversaries of all kinds—with one single exception.

Perhaps she was not wholly devoid of patriotism ; but unfortunately, during her third year, her father, who was a direct descendant of one old fellow that fought at Bunker Hill and of another that signed the Declaration of Independence, attempted to develop the love of country, by means of a pack of firecrackers, one of which went off too close to the little maiden's feet. The explosion extinguished any sparks of that noble sentiment that might have lain smoldering in her bosom. She may pick lint some day; but she will never carry fire-arms.

But what enthusiasm she lacked for

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the Fourth of July, she made up for on Christmas. That was the day of days. It was not only the birthday of Christ, but her own. For, on that Christmas Eve, God said to himself, "I will now fashion a soul as full of beauty as a star."

And as a lover blows a kiss across a valley to the window where burns the candle of his sweetheart, He breathed that little soul across the space of the sky into a human habitation where a mother lay sick with love and dreamed of its coming.

The fourth Christmas morning which this little soul had seen on earth dawned bright and beautiful. She was up betimes. Sweet dreams she had dreamed that night, but they paled before the realities of the day. She opened her eyes to a great green tree that had sprung from the hard floor by some supernal mystery while she slept. Enormous

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torches were burning on its branches like new stars, when her papa kissed her lips and took her up in his arms a great while before day. And oh! Wonder of wonders. Oranges and bananas, and bags of pop-corn and candy were growing on its branches! A little sled had sprouted from one limb, a fur muff from another, a Mother Goose's book from a third, and on a fourth a dolly as large as herself! What kind of a tree could it be? Was it in this way that all the beautiful things came into the world? She would plant this tree in her garden.

In her white nightgown she danced around it like a fairy, her hair floating about her shoulders, her cheeks burning, her eyes glowing, her rosebud mouth emitting exclamations of joy or printing kisses upon the lips of those two great beings who hovered around

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her in her little heaven and made and shared her happiness.

All day long, busy, blissful, tireless, she lived in wonderland, and at night—who shall narrate those marvels? Where are those deities whom Homer, Vergil, Dante and Tasso invoked to help them tell of things a thousand-fold less strange than Dolly saw that night in the little Presbyterian chapel around the corner?

There were millions of people, she thought. There were children everywhere. There was laughter and song. There were little people no larger than herself, who stood on the platform alone and said verses in little flutelike voices that made the people clap their hands. But this was nothing. For suddenly right out of a great fireplace, heralded by the ringing of bells, there

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sprang that jovial miracle of the ages whose name she had heard a thousand times, but whose person she had never seen.

How should she know that it was her own dear Papa Beardsley? He loomed like a great red mountain capped with snow. His voice was like thunder when he laughed or shouted to his reindeer. As to his gifts—they were bountiful as the providence of God!

Down the aisle he came, with an enormous pack on his back running over with trinkets. How did he know the name of every little boy and girl? He was coming her way! It was too much. One could not expect a little four-year-old girl to endure that suspense and astonishment without crying! Suppose that you yourself should see wonders as great, proportioned to your size?

She bore it until he spoke her name.

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and then she buried her little head in her mother's neck as an ostrich buries his in the sand and lifted up her voice and wept. * * * *

It scarcely seems that such a paradise as this Beardsley home could be destroyed, in a world where the good God of whom Little Saint Sunshine's papa had so often told her had His royal residence. But it was.

William Beardsley sickened and died before the snow, through which that beloved old St. Nicholas had driven his reindeer, had vanished from the earth. The beautiful little cottage had to be sold, and Mrs. Beardsley, brave and determined, took a room in a tenement house and began the terrible struggle for bread, with a needle as the weapon of her warfare. She could have taught; but who would take care of Dolly while she was away from home? No—she

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must have the dear one every hour where she could touch her with her hand and fold her to her heart; and so she became a seamstress.

Her courage was a miracle to the broken-spirited women whom she met in her new surroundings, and when one of them asked her, "How can you be so brave," she said, with a look in her eyes her questioner never forgot: "Do you think I could have lived with William Beardsley for six years and have been a coward?"

The end of Little Saint Sunshine's tragedies did not come with her father's death. One night when her brave mother was hurrying home with a great bundle of clothing in her hand, she slipped and fell on the car track. The details of the accident are too terrible! Let us pass them by, and follow Little Saint Sunshine to the Orphans' Home,

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whither she was carried by loving hands, and learn how God comforted her in her sorrow; how she learned to smile and laugh again and to live once more in the sunshine. As we too, ought, when troubles darken our pathway!

For who knows what there is in store for us and for what mission we are being trained?

Ends which can not be seen through the gloom of such tragedies often await us, and justify, or at least sanctify, the means by which they are gained. Let us wait before condemning such mysteries until we hear how, like the bee that carries pollen from one flower to another, this little messenger of love gave the sweetness of that desolated home of hers to another barren of such joy.



II

*A*WAY out on a southwestern prairie, many miles back from the Texas and Pacific Railroad, there stands a great, solitary stone house. It was built of huge rocks brought from a quarry on the banks of a river not far away. They were unhewn, and as the house was square and unadorned, the few travelers who passed that way received the impression that it had been built by Titans!

It was, at least, inhabited by them, for there dwelt beneath its roof a family of giants. Not real giants of the Jack

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and his bean-stalk kind, nor those who lived in Brobdingnag, but just great, big, human giants.

They had come into the country many years before in a "prairie schooner," Mike Donovan and his wife Bridget, sitting on the front seat like the statues at the gates of the Theban temples, while four healthy, happy boys rolled and tumbled over each other under the canvas cover, or, leaping to the ground, scared up the partridges, stoned the jack-rabbits and chased the coyotes through the sage-brush and the cactus.

In the lap of the mother lay a fifth, a baby boy, fast asleep.

They were north of Ireland people, had lived in a hovel, had suffered oppression, were ignorant; but in the souls of parents and children was something noble struggling to get free.

Donovan pointed to the boys and a

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smile illuminated the great freckled face framed in a mop of red hair and beard.

The blue eyes of his wife followed the lads as they ran and leaped. She drew a long deep breath, raised her babe to her lips, kissed it and sighed.

“We’re a long ways from home, Moike,” she said.

“Not far enough, Bridget. No more hovels and landlords for me. I was choked there. I can breathe down to me boots here. Look at the sky. How big and blue it is and how kind it bends over the worruld! See the broad prairies with their moiles and moiles of land begging for the plow and the seed. There’s elbow room here, Bridget. Room for horses and cows and pigs and men. I think of it day and night. There is something to live for, to worruk for, to hope for, Bridget. It’s a baste I’ve been long

enough. It's a man I'll be now. We're no long ways from home, Bridget. We're nearer every minute! To-morrow night we shall be there. Ould Ireland is not our home. Our home is in free Ameriky."

"Ah Moike, the little cabin seems swbate to me this day. And the little village. It was there I grew up. It was there you courted me, Moike. It is there under a green sod in the cime-tery that my little Kathleen lies. I feel her drawing my heart, Moike. It's far, far away."

Two great tears stole down the bronze cheeks and lost themselves in the red beard of the man, for the death of the little girl had almost broken his kind Irish heart.

"Home's yonder, I tell you, Bridget," he said, choking back his emotion.

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"Yis, Moike," she answered, looking into his face with what trust and hope she could command.

The man's soul was evidently stirred within him and he thought aloud in a waking dream.

"I see the log house rising there, in me moind's eye, where the hundred and sixty acres of government land is waiting to feed me horses, me cows, me pigs, me Bridget and me boys. Ah, Bridget, I've lived forty years and in all that toime I never felt myself a man till now. Take the reins, Bridget, I must get out and walk. I must feel the ground under my feet. I must touch it with my hand. I love it."

He strode along by the side of the wagon for a little way, and then Bridget saw him pick up a handful of fresh soil and smell of it as if it were a flower.

In ten years' time this Irish conqueror

subdued a kingdom. He and his stalwart boys fenced their land and built a log house from the trees in the river bottom. They bred horses and cows and hogs until the earth seemed teeming with them. They had added acre to acre and farm to farm.

After five years more of toil, Donovan boasted with honest pride that he owned without encumbrance the biggest ranch, the biggest house and the biggest barn within a hundred miles.

“Purty good for fifteen years’ worruk!” he would say, waving his hands in a comprehensive gesture.

The four older lads had grown to be giants like their father, and little Mike, the baby, was a “fine slip of a bye,” straight as an arrow, fleet as an Indian and likely to be the tallest and the broadest of them all.

At evening time, when the father and

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his five sons came trooping in from the field or riding home from the range, they were a sight to behold.

There was something romantic and picturesque about them that appealed powerfully to the imagination of the frontiersmen. Their great size, their herculean strength, their skill at games, their loyalty to each other, their utter fearlessness, soon passed into tradition.

Wonderful stories of their prowess and of their courage were told in camp and at the saloon.

It was said that Terry could pick up a whisky barrel, raise it over his head and drink out of the bung-hole.

Dan had been seen to kill a bull with a single blow of his fist.

Patrick had chased some horse thieves for twenty miles on foot and alone, without so much as breaking his dog-trot, and then, shooting one of the

stolen ponies, he fell behind it and fought the thieves to death.

Tim had outwrestled, outrun, outjumped, outshot and outfought every athlete in the Panhandle.

And last of all, there was Micky, whom, because he was different from the rest and would neither swear, nor fight, nor drink, they called the Little Parson.

It was not a term of derision, but rather of respect, for quiet and gentle as he was there was in him a courage, a loyalty, an inherent nobility which had gained for him the love and admiration of men as well as of children.

In cattle craft, the lad had no superior. No one could outride him, no one could throw a lasso better, no one had such mastery over the wild creatures with which they had to deal.

A horse that Micky had broken com-

manded the highest price in the market, for he did it by gentleness.

Let others, if they would, tie the legs of their broncos, throw them, mount them, and then, when they sprang to their feet, ride them until they were subdued by terror. This was not Micky's method. He gave them salt, petted them, laid an empty bag on their backs, filled it quarter full of oats, then half, then entirely, and finally crawled gently into a saddle which he had carefully buckled around them and rode them away over the prairie.

"This makes them love me," he said.

One wild autumn day, Micky's courage and wit were put to a test, the successful endurance of which intrenched him forever in the hearts of the cowboys.

The herd was on the range and the five brothers were watching them, when a "norther," one of those fierce winds



that sweep from the Rocky Mountains across Texas to the Gulf, burst on them. The phenomena attending it were vivid and terrible. The herd was frightened and a stampede began.

Did you ever see a stampede of five hundred or a thousand cattle? It is an exhibition of unreasoning terror and irresistible energy never to be forgotten. Woe to the man who happens to be in its pathway !

The four older brothers by some mischance were at the rear of the herd when the cattle started to run toward a precipitous bank of the river. They had been so absorbed in a game of cards that they did not notice the slight premonitory symptoms which had preceded the storm, but they sprang to their feet when they heard the wild bellowing of the cattle.

“ Ride to the east,” cried Tim.

“ To the west, I say,” yelled Dan.

“Too late,” said Terry.

“They are headed for the cliff! Where is Micky?” groaned Patrick, his foot in the stirrup.

There was no answer needed, for at that instant they caught sight of the Little Parson, who happened to be cooking dinner in the camp. He was a long way off, but they could see that he was clapping a saddle on the back of Whitefoot, his favorite bronco, and for an instant they all paused.

“What is he up to?” asked Terry.

“He’s going to”—the rest of the sentence was unfinished, for they watched breathlessly while he flung a bag of salt across the pommel of the saddle and vaulted into the seat.

As they mounted and rode furiously after him, Micky turned his horse toward the herd which was pounding toward the river west of him, a mile or more away.

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The bronco, obedient to the will of its master, set off at a terrific pace on its dangerous mission. Bareheaded, his eyes on fire, his heart in his throat, the Little Parson urged him forward.

“Head them off, Whitefoot! We must cross their path!” he cried.

It looked like riding to certain death, and the brothers yelled to him to come back.

Their words were lost in the roar of the wind and in the tramping of the herd, beneath whose feet the earth seemed quaking.

“We are going to make it!” the boy cried exultantly. And they did. For, cutting diagonally across the path which the cattle were taking to the river, Micky rode in ahead of the herd.

Whipping his hunting knife from its sheath, Micky cut a gash in the bag and

the salt filtered out in a long white trail behind him.

In another moment the front rank of the cattle had reached it, and, sniffing the grateful odor, slowed their flight. Slowed only, for with the force of a thousand battering rams the rear ranks drove them forward. Some tripped and fell! Others rolled over them, and the Little Parson smiled.

On went Whitefoot faster than the wind itself, and behind him the long, white line of salt marked the flight of the frightened beasts, forcing them farther and farther toward the west.

“They’ll catch him,” gasped Tim.

“He’s a goner,” groaned Dan.

“It’ll be a close shave,” said Terry.

“He’ll beat them yet,” cried Pat.

It was a close shave! There was still a quarter of a mile to make, before he rode out from between the upper jaw of

the river and the under jaw of the line of cattle that was rapidly shutting him in.

The boy's courage rose with the danger. He measured the distance with his eye. He leaned over the pommel of the saddle and patted the horse's neck.

"Go! Whitefoot! Good boy! Good boy! One more spurt and we're safe!"

"He's made it!" cried Tim, snatching his hat from his head and waving it in the air. Then a yell went up from the throats of the four brothers.

He had made it and he had saved the herd!

Small wonder that old Mike called these sturdy youths his "bully byes!"

You would have thought him happy, would you not?

Ah! There was a fly in Mike's ointment as there is in yours.



III

*P*OOOR Bridget! she had never been happy in America. While Mike and the boys had been spreading abroad like green bay trees, she had hung drooping over her grief like a weeping willow. Day and night her thoughts visited the little grave where her Kathleen was lying.

For a time she had been partly consoled by the presence of Micky, who, having been born during the most passionate period of her grief, came into the world with a gentle and half melancholy nature.

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But when he had grown large enough to crawl into a saddle, he had followed the men to the range and left her alone with her sorrow.

Her raven hair became white. Her figure lost its roundness and her shoulders began to stoop. She did her duty as wife and mother, but her heart was under the Irish sod! Often at evening time they found her sitting on the porch, gazing eastward, a sad and yearning look in her great, dark eyes.

“Moike,” she said one night after the boys had gone to bed, “sit down by me side.”

He was beginning to stand a little in awe of her, for she seemed removed from him by her grief.

He drew up his chair and looked at her timidly.

“I was thinking that the star yonder,

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was looking down on the grave of me Kathleen," she said in a deep, sad voice.

"Mother of God, Bridget, will you niver forget the little gurrel?"

"Niver, Moike."

"She will be the death of you and of me, Bridget."

"Of you, Moike?"

"Sure! Do you think I can see my own sweetheart grievin' and mournin' year after year and meself no comfort to her at all, at all, without dying by inches? You shcare me, Bridget, wid your big, black, hungry looking eyes. The boys need more of you than they get. 'Tis a sin to give your best self to a little gurrel that's with the saints."

"Ah, Moike, I am living in another worruld."

"But, Bridget, my darlint, isn't this worruld good enough? Here's the byes, and the land and the stock and

me. Here is the great bowl of the sky and the rolling prairies and the shwate air of heaven, and the flowers and the freedom, and the plenty and liberty. What more do yez want?"

He filled his great lungs with the night air and gazed out upon the good, old plenteous earth like a man in love with the sky and the soil.

"No, Moike, it's not enough, to be plain and true. Ye've been good to me, and the byes have. With all your roisterin', drinkin', swearin' and fightin' you are sound to the core. But, Moike, I am a woman and I need a daughter's love. Oh, Moike, why is it, that, with the living creatures around us bringing forth their offspring, male and female, no little gurrel has come to *me*. By day I think, and by night I dream of my Kathleen."

A sigh broke from the chest of the

giant who sat in his man's helplessness by the side of the sorrowful woman.

"Moike," she continued, "I was readin' a paper the other day, and it said that in Cincinnati, which is somewhere in the States, I think, there's an asylum, an Orphans' Home, and they sind children to those who have none of their own."

"We've some of our own, Bridget, great hearty lads, and the Little Parson besides, who is more of a gurrel than a boy," he replied nervously.

"Moike, darlint," she continued, "would you let me sind there for a little gurrel? Say yis, Moike. Say yis. Who knows but the sight of a little gurrel like Kathleen,—she was five when she died, Moike,—would stop this gnawing at my heart."

"Sind for her, honey, sind for her? Sind for two of thim or tin of thim,"

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he cried, hope dawning in his heart. "There are potaties enough, and there's milk enough, and there's bread enough. If she would bring back the light to your eyes and the smile to your lips, I'd give her a thousand acres of land and a hundred head of me cattle. Faith and I would, Bridget."

"Ah, Moike, thank yez, my lad. It's loike you!" she exclaimed. "The air tastes sweeter to me. The night looks fairer. Ye don't know what grief I have suffered. It's been so lonesome. But I shall be happier now. It will take money, Moike. Give me a ginerous gift to sind to them."

"There is gold in the strong box, Bridget, and it's yours," he said. "You have helped earn it and helped save it. Take as much as you wish. Take it all. I had rather see you happy than to own the State."

Which was true. For old Mike's heart was "sound to the core," as his wife had said.

He rose, went to the iron safe where he kept his ready money and came back with a hundred dollars in gold.

"Will it be enough?" he asked.

"A plenty! I feel young again!" says she and kissed him.

"Hiven sind it," says he.

The next morning she sent Micky to the railroad station to forward the money by express. In the same parcel was a letter which brought tears to the eyes of the superintendent when he read it, for it was the passionate outpouring of a woman's heart, a heart that was lonely and hungry for love. There was a sincerity and a tenderness in it that roused an immediate response. Nothing could harm a little child in a home where such love lived in a wo-

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man's heart—so the superintendent reasoned. But still another influence decided him to take more chances than usual, in committing his treasures to unknown hands.

It was this.

The description given by Bridget of the child she had lost and wanted to replace corresponded, in the most minute particular, to the personal appearance and disposition of Little Saint Sunshine.



IV

*A*ND so Little Saint Sunshine was prepared for her long journey.

The kind people in the asylum experienced the greatest pleasure in purchasing her wardrobe with the money so generously provided by Bridget Donovan.

“We must not be too extravagant,” said the superintendent.

“But she must be well dressed,” replied his wife. “She requires but little decoration, being her own most perfect adornment. But she can stand a great deal! And then, Texas is a great way off and those Donovans live in the coun-

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try, and perhaps do not know or do not care much about pretty clothes. So we must send their little girl to them well and beautifully dressed. I have a great deal of faith in the influence of pretty clothes. Oh yes, we differ; but I am right! So just leave it to me and I will send them something that will transform their home.”

She had her way, and when they took Dolly down to the station that night in her shaggy Tam o’ Shanter, her fuzzy ulster, her fur muff and boa, she was a charming sight, so sweet, so simple, so beautiful, so happy. For how could she be sad? What did she know about the loss she had suffered in her parents’ death; the danger of leaving these kind friends; the length of the journey; the peril of the adventure?

There is nothing in life that stabs the heart with such a poignant sorrow as re-

alizing that our children can exist without us, can even be happy. But reflection turns this sorrow to joy. For who would have the life of a little child darkened and saddened by the full appreciation of its loss, just for the egotistic pleasure of knowing we had made ourselves indispensable to it?

No, their ability to dispense with necessities, to accept impossibilities, to adjust themselves to new situations without regret, to face peril without consciousness of its existence, to root themselves like seeds in any soil, will always remain the most beautiful and affecting phenomenon of life.

When the good superintendent and his wife took Dolly through the big iron gates at the station and down the stone path beside the iron track, there were half a dozen locomotives panting slowly and heavily as if sighing over the long

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journey they were about to make, crowds of people brushing past each other and struggling for the best seats, baggage men pushing cart-loads of trunks before them, grimy workmen tapping the iron wheels with iron hammers.

The confusion was appalling. It was incomprehensible. But nothing disturbed the little traveler. She rolled her big blue eyes around and smiled at everybody who looked at her, and for that matter at those who did not. She simply took everything for granted, which is the deepest wisdom of life and attainable only by children.

“Let me take her,” said the colored porter, captivated by the little beauty and sublimely unconscious of the big satchel and lunch basket of which he should have relieved the superintendent.

“This is a little girl who is going to

Texas," the superintendent said to the sleeping-car conductor, who stood by the steps as they entered.

"Alone?" he asked, a look of tenderness suddenly lighting his features.

"Yes, alone. She is a little orphan and is on her way to a new home. You will be kind to her, won't you?" the superintendent said.

"I've got one of my own," he answered, drawing himself up with fatherly pride.

The superintendent smiled and they all followed the porter and his little charge into the car.

"Here is her ticket, and this is her little shipping tag, pinned to a pleat in her dress right over her heart, 'Dolly Beardsley from the Cincinnati Orphans' Home, care of Michael Donovan, Killarney Cattle Ranch, near El Paso, Texas.' "

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“You think she will be safe, don’t you?” the superintendent’s wife asked, more than half regretting the risk that she was taking.

“As safe as in her crib under your own roof, Madam. There is not an employee on a railroad in America who would not die for a charge like that,” the conductor replied, with a proud confidence in American manhood.

The superintendent and his wife lingered lovingly with Dolly until the bell rang, and then the goodbys had to be said.

Their kind words and their faces, sad now for the first time, made the occasion a serious one to the little traveler, and her chin began to quiver.

That beautiful signal of distress recalled them to their duty to be brave, and they tried to smile.

“Dood by. I’ll tome adain, thoon,”

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she answered, putting up her little mouth to be kissed.

It was like parting with their own flesh and blood.

When they had disappeared, and the little pilgrim found herself alone among so many strange people, two great tears rolled from her eyes, the corners of her little red lips went down and a sob came from her such as would have broken a heart of stone.

This little tragedy did not pass unnoticed. Among the travelers who had been watching it with more than a passing interest were an old, gray-haired man, a woman dressed in mourning and a young girl who seemed to be her daughter.

At sight of the little maiden's tears, all three sprang to comfort her. The old gentleman and the young lady instinctively gave way to the mother, and,

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while she took Dolly into her arms, they dropped into the seat opposite, ready to supplement her efforts at consolation if any were needed.

She folded the child to her heart and let her sob. Such grief, thank God, is brief.

In a few moments the sobs diminished and the tear-stained face looked out upon its new environment.

The lady now removed the hat and the little ulster, thus exposing to view the shipping tag of this precious piece of living freight.

The bright eyes of the young girl deciphered the legend and she read it aloud.

“God bless my soul!” said the old gentleman, taking a very large silk handkerchief from the pocket in his coat skirt and blowing a loud blast from a large nose which became suddenly very red.

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Within a few moments the facts about the child had been accurately conjectured and quietly telegraphed down both sides of the car; and a dozen passengers instantly became the sworn friends of the little waif who had just launched her bark upon the sea of life, alone.

A generous rivalry sprang up among them to see who could do the most for her. They forgot their own sorrows in solicitude for her welfare. One touch of nature had made this car-world kin. In the genial atmosphere Dolly's spirits revived. She forgot her apprehensions. The shower of April tears had blown away. The sunny face was now wreathed in smiles.

"And so your name is Dolly Beardsley?" the lady asked.

"Yeth mam; but my papa always called me thomething elthe."

"And what was that?"

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“Little Thaint Thunthine.”

“Little Saint Sunshine,” echoed the old man, who was still having trouble with his nasal organ.

“Little Saint Sunshine,” echoed the young girl.

“Little Saint Sunshine,” echoed the woman.

“And so you are going on a very long journey, are you, Little Saint Sunshine?” the old man now asked, leaving the corner of his handkerchief sticking out of his pocket within easy reach in case of emergency.

“Ithe going to Texath,” Dolly said.

“And where is Texas, my dear?” he inquired with a sort of serio-comic sense of the pathos of her inevitable answer.

“Oh, ith jeth to 'Texath,” she replied.

“And is that your little muff and boa?” the woman asked.

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“Thith ith my little puthy-cat and thith is my little thkirl.”

“Your little what?” inquired the old gentleman.

“My little thkirl.”

“Oh, a squirrel?”

“Yeth, thkirl, and I’ve dot a dolly in my thatchel; but I’m not to play with it until to-morrow, tauthe I’ll get tired.”

“And have you had your supper?” asked the young girl.

“Oh, yeth, I had bwead and milk and peacheth and cweam.”

“Are you going to sleep in this car?” said the old gentleman.

“Yeth, I’m going to thleep on a thelph! I don’t know where that thelph ith; but they juth let it down and put curtainth up in front of it and make a little tent and I juth get inthide of it and go to thleep. What do you think of that?”

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“Oh, I think that is grand,” said the old gentleman, gazing down into the big, marveling eyes with a vague wish that he might look out once more upon the world with such sensation of wonder.

“What time do you go to bed, darling?” asked the lady.

“Five, thix, theven o’clock,” she replied, looking up into the calm, sweet face with an expression of adoration.

“And may I put you to bed?”

“The thuperintendent thaid that the porter would put me to bed. He’th that black man! I don’t know what makth him black. I gueth tha’t paint.”

“I gueth it ith,” said the old gentleman, laughing heartily. While the young girl leaned over and kissed the lipping lips.

“I shall ask him if he will let me do that. Would you like to have me? I

have put little girls to bed very often," said the lady.

"Yeth, mam. I love oo," she said.

"And don't you love me?" said the old gentleman, lifting his eyebrows and making a sad mouth.

Then there appeared a faint flash of the woman that was yet to be.

"I love dat lady," she said, looking coquettishly from under eyebrows and pointing at the college girl.

This was a heavy blow to the old fellow, who immediately put up his hands and began to cry.

"Oh, yeth, I love oo too," she said, stepping to the floor and trying to pull his hands away. "Don't cry, don't cry!"

He was very easily pacified, and taking her up into his arms, gave her his keys, his eye-glasses and even his watch to play with.

It was now getting dark and the porter, mindful of his commission, came to prepare her berth.

"Well, honey," he said kindly, "we'se gwine to make dis bed now and put you in. Is you all ready?"

"Thith lady ith doin' to put me to bed," she said, pointing to her new friend.

"Dat's all right. She gwine do dat all right—better'n Joe. But Joe 'll make the bed."

"Ith dat paint on your fathe?" asked Dolly.

"Oh, Lawd, no," said Joe laughing. "I wish it was, for I would soon be white folks."

"Won't dat tome off?" she asked, pointing a little fat finger at his black skin.

This naive inquiry amused Joe as much as any one, for little Dolly seemed

incapable of giving anything but pleasure, no matter what she said or did.

The whole car was interested in the task to which the kind lady now addressed herself. When she opened the satchel and drew out the little white nightgown there was something about it which must have excited very tender memories in the heart of the old man, for he began feeling in every pocket but the right one, for his handkerchief. No doubt he was living over again some of the most sacred hours of his life, hours at the close of vanished days, when a brood of little children scrambled upstairs from the nursery to their chambers clad in robes like this—a procession of angels of the household. Once more he listened to their evening prayers. Once more he kissed their lips and heard their fond good nights. Once more with his arm around his wife he went back to

the library to lay those plans which had never come to their fruition.

Where were those loved ones now? Green graves held all that was left of them on earth. Long years of struggle had rolled between those happy days and this; but a little white night-robe with a bit of lace about the collar had, with a talismanic force, revived and made them live again.

It was fortunate for the kind old man that the young lady sat beside him, for while he felt in every pocket but the right one, she drew his handkerchief forth and placed it in his hand.

The little nightgown produced an effect no less profound upon the kind lady. She too lived over again a sacred past, and she protracted as long as she could the sweet task of bathing the little body and preparing it for sleep. But she could not prolong it forever, and when

at last she brought her to the berth and pushed the curtain aside, Dolly looked up and said : " I dot to thay my prayerth."

"That is right, darling, kneel down at my knee."

Her words could not be heard by other ears than those of the kind lady and the good God to whom they were directed, but the college girl and all the other people in the car knew that she was uttering that sacred prayer of children. " Now I lay me down to thleepth, I pray Thee, Lord, my thoul to keep. If I thould die before I wake, I pray Thee, Lord, my thoul to take."

The next morning, the whole company of travelers waited eagerly for the appearance of Dolly. Every one had learned all that could be known about her brief life-tragedy and all were eager to do something to help her. But by some superiority of power or purpose,

the motherly lady and the young girl and the old gentleman, held their own against all rivals in this sacred ministry.

“What have you got in this great basket, Little Saint Sunshine?” asked her protectress, after she had performed the toilet of her little charge.

“Thath my lunch. There are orangeth and pickleth and—and tookieth and jam and everything.”

“And were you going to help yourself to whatever you wanted?”

“No. The porter wath going to feed me. The porter ith that black man and what you think? That black won’t tome off. He told me.”

“Madam,” said the old gentleman, “I never could bear cold lunches myself. If you will allow me, I would like to take Little Saint Sunshine and yourself and our young friend to breakfast with me. There would have been no other

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reason for telling it, but I happen to be the vice-president of the road, and perhaps I could make it a little more pleasant for you on that account."

The kind lady looked pleased and the young girl looked awed, but they accepted his invitation, for there could be no doubt from his face and his love for Dolly what kind of a man he was.

Little Saint Sunshine's wishes were not even consulted.

"Well, come then, let us be going," said Mr. Vice-President, and taking Dolly up in his arms he led the way.

It was much the grandest sight that Dolly had ever seen, but one glance embraced it all, and she wove it skilfully into her scheme of existence with a single mental effort. Nothing was too wonderful to happen in this wonderful world. If the train had suddenly taken

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wings and flown away to the moon; if the moon had come into the car and offered to pour Dolly a cup of tea; if the sun had said, "I will be your rubber ball and you can bound me on the floor of the universe," it would not have startled her for more than a single instant.

As it was with the breakfast, so it was with everything else which the kind friends did for the little traveler. She accepted all, and enjoyed all, and repaid all—repaid it by her perfect enjoyment of it all. The child supplied the stimulus and charm which only children give to life. For what good would life be if all of us were born twenty-five years old?

"You don't know what I have dot in my thatchel," Dolly said to the old gentleman soon after breakfast, shaking a

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dimpled finger at the great vice-president, as if he were a neighbor's little boy.

"No, my dear, what is it?" he asked, with more interest than he would have felt if some one had told him that the stock of the *T. & P.* had gone up ten points.

"Ith a dolly! A real live dolly! The can thyut her eyeth and open them!"

"Oh, bless my soul!"

"The hath the longetht, lovelietht, goldenetht hair, and I can comb it! And the hath blue eyeth and little teeth and thockingth and thlipperth."

"My gracious! Can she talk?"

"The can thqueak!"

"Let me see her. I can't wait another minute. Shall we let the kind lady find her?" he asked, reaching for the satchel. His delight was not as-



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sumed. He did not feign pleasure. Sitting beside that fount of childish happiness was like sitting at the side of a spring in a desert.

When Dolly took her nap in the afternoon, the old gentleman, who was not really so very old, said to his two companions: "I wonder if it isn't about time for us to be making each other's acquaintance now that we have got to know our mutual friend so well. My name is Cathcart."

"And mine is Simmons, and this is my daughter. She has not been well and I am taking her to California for the winter," the kind lady said.

"And your home?"

"Is in Auburn, New York."

"Auburn? I grew up there."

"I have been thinking so."

At this remark he started and inquired: "You have? And why?"

“I too spent my childhood there.”

“What was your maiden name?”

By this time he had fixed his piercing, black eyes intently on her face.

“Bronson.”

“Minnie Bronson?”

“Yes, Minnie Bronson, and you are Tom Cathcart. I began to suspect it several hours ago.”

“God bless my soul,” exclaimed the vice-president, his eyes opening to their full width.

He grasped her hand warmly and said with a feeling that did his kind heart credit: “And so you are Minnie Bronson! I see you, now. How could that face have concealed itself so long and be revealed so suddenly? What a pleasure this is! How long is it since we have seen each other?”

“Nearly thirty years, I think.”

“For thirty years! Why, bless my

soul, you don't look a day older than when we used to go skating on Owasco Lake. And so this young lady is your daughter? Of course she is. She is your image. She is your very self."

"I am afraid you are contradicting yourself," said Mrs. Simmons, with a smile.

"Not I," said the gallant old vice-president, "for you don't look a day older than your daughter. Oh, yes. I see the gray hairs. But they don't count. I have a few myself, and I am not a day older than when I was a boy."

"But the wrinkles!"

"Yes, and the wrinkles. I see those too, but they are only skin deep! And besides, I admire them; they are the hieroglyphics of life; by them I can read your life history. You have suffered. Those few lines are furrows caused by the most subtle instrument of time. And

that serene expression of resignation and peace is lovelier than even the radiant one of hope I used to know so well. I wonder I did not recognize you in your daughter. She is yourself reproduced.”

“Yes. I am living my life again in her.”

And so Dolly had reunited two old friends. For her and these friends, the days sped swiftly. The childless millionaire had lost his heart to the little orphan, and those who traveled with them to Los Angeles affirmed that he—but the issues of that chance meeting do not belong to the story of Little Saint Sunshine’s life.

If all the good she did and all the hearts she brought together were to be told and described, the covers of this book would not hold the record.

After three happy days, the train approached the station where Little Saint

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Sunshine was to leave them, and every one's heart was saddened. The vice-president was the most inconsolable of all, and he had formed a plan, the execution of which he had determined to attempt.

The whistle blew. The black porter came for her baggage. The train conductor and the sleeping-car conductor came to offer their services. All the passengers crowded around to say good by.

"Good by, Little Saint Sunshine, good by, good by," they cried.

"Dood by everybody," she said putting up her little red lips.

The lady and her daughter were crying, when the good vice-president took up Little Sunshine, carried her out on the platform and set her down.

She had her dolly in her arms and gazed around with childish wonder.

The porter placed her satchel and basket beside her. The vice-president tightly held her hand.

The station stood in the midst of a vast prairie. There were a few wretched buildings scattered about. A dozen loafers leaned against the walls. A few cowboys stalked stiffly up and down the platform and a group of Indians looked stolidly at the engine and the cars.

“Which one of these heathens can it be? Good Lord! Is this little child to be transplanted into some home to be tyrannized over by one of these brutal wretches?” said the vice-president to himself.

Just then he noticed a man of gigantic stature, clad in a loose corduroy suit, a sombrero on the back of his head, his great mop of red hair and beard radiating like beams from the

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sun, a long horse-whip in his hands, looking eagerly about him.

“If that’s the man he’ll not find this little two-foot midget by looking six feet into the air,” thought the vice-president, crossly.

“Are you looking for this little girl?” he asked, leading Dolly toward him. The giant bent down as a citizen of Brobdingnag might have done, gazed into the space below him and beheld the tiny little creature hugging her dolly tight to her heart and looking wonderingly upward.

“I reckon I am, stranger,” he answered, in a stentorian voice; and stooping down, he lifted Dolly high in the air.

She sat perched on his arm like a goldfinch on the limb of an oak, and looked timidly into his great leonine countenance.

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“My friend,” said Mr. Cathcart, “I want to have a word with you.”

“Twinty,” said Mike, good humoredly.

“I have ridden three days and nights in the car with this little girl. I am a childless old man and rich, very rich. I will give you a thousand dollars—ten thousand, if you will let me have your chance to adopt her.”

The rough old Texan looked long and earnestly into the face of the stranger, then into that of the child, and then into the stranger’s again. He shook his head kindly, but firmly.

“I’m sorry for yez, pardner,” he said, “but tin thousand, nor twinty, won’t buy her. ’Tis me Bridget that wants her. She’s dying by inches of heart-sickness, and it’s to take the place of her Kathleen that this little shpalpeen has come.”

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His kind Irish heart had interpreted the emotions of the old man accurately and generously, and he gave him his hand.

The stranger shook it ; but tears of regret filled his eyes.

“Well,” he said, “another dream has taken wings. How I could have loved her ! It is a sad blow.”

“I believe yez,” said Mike.

Just then the conductor called, “All aboard,” and the bell rang.

“Good by, Little Saint Sunshine, good by,” the old man said, his lips quivering and his throat choking.

Dolly sprang into his outstretched arms and covered his face with kisses.

“There are some things money can’t buy,” he said as he gave her back to her new friend.

“Ye’er right. I’ve found that out me ownself,” said Mike, and looked up in

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astonishment to see a head out of every window in the car and to hear twenty voices crying, "Good by, Dolly! Good by, Little Saint Sunshine! God bless you!"



V

*T*HE giant bore Dolly in his arms to the rear platform of the station and placed her on the back seat of a wagon, to which were hitched a pair of horses that danced and jumped and stood on their hind-legs as the train went rumbling past.

On the front seat there was a tall, shy boy of about sixteen years, who was none other than the Little Parson. He touched the horses gently with a whip, spoke to them in a soft, low voice which had a strange quality of command, and they quieted down. From watching

them, he turned a furtive glance at Dolly. His eyes were very deep and very dark. She could not have told what was in them that affected her so, but she knew she had found a friend, and smiled.

A very gentle smile shone back into her face from his, and curiously enough a blush stole over his freckles and tan. Whatever that emotion was there was never a day in his later life when the Little Parson would not have told you that it was one of the most divine that he had ever felt.

“Keep them quiet and watch the little gurrel till I get the thrunk,” his father said.

“I dot a dolly,” said Little Saint Sunshine, holding it up for him to see.

“It’s a beauty,” said the Little Parson, blushing again and not knowing

what else to say. For although he had romped with the daughters of cowboys in the district school, this was his first vision of an angel!

“Her name ith Thuthie.”

“It’s a good name.”

“Are you my new papa?”

“Oh Lord, no!” exclaimed the Little Parson, blushing a deeper red than ever.

“Who are you?” Dolly asked.

“Oh, I’m only Micky. Here comes your father.”

Dolly would as soon have believed that a mountain could have been her father as this immense being who came round the corner bearing her trunk on his shoulder as if it were a band-box—he was so unlike her own papa, whose delicate white face she could just remember.

“Let ’em go, Parson,” said Donovan, as he climbed into the wagon, and

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away they whirled in a cloud of dust, Dolly sitting like a little midget by the side of her colossal friend.

The attempts made at conversation were not very successful. Micky was too busy with the horses and too embarrassed to take any part. Mike could have talked with Little Saint Sunshine if she had known anything about horses and cattle; and Little Saint Sunshine could have talked with Mike had he known anything about dollies. But things being as they were, silence was inevitable and best.

Everywhere was silence, save the low rumble of the wagon and the soft thud of the horses' feet. It was a land of great silence. The vast prairie stretched like a frozen ocean in every direction. The prairie dogs ducked into their holes as the wagon passed. A coyote loped on his cushioned feet along the edge of

the horizon. Herds of cattle noiselessly cropped the grass in the distance. In the blue depths of the sky, the buzzards sailed as quietly as thistle-down.

For the first time, the soul of the little traveler came under the spell of nature. The infinite and the eternal had forced themselves into the consciousness of her soul. The immensities around her hushed and subdued her sensitive heart. Her feelings were too deep for tears, and she suffered herself to be borne along like a straw upon the river, helpless, purposeless, unquestioning, the victim, the sport, the darling—she knew not what, of the irresistible energies around her.

And now the light of day began to fade and the stars began to peer out of their hiding places in the sky, the same stars that had looked down on the cradle of the infant Saviour, two thousand years

before, on that Christmas Eve when the Magi were steering their way toward the place of his birth, by the chart of the heavens.

For it was Christmas Eve, though neither Mike nor the Little Parson, nor any one else in the Donovan home, save Bridget, had thought of it, life having become too serious and full of the getting of cattle and horses and sheep and gold, for such sentimental nonsense as Christmas stockings and Christmas trees.

The night was warm, as it sometimes is at that time in the Panhandle of the Lone Star State, and Dolly, wrapped in her muff and boa with her dolly in her arms, sat comfortably against the side of her mighty friend.

But she was tired, and the motion of the wagon, the freshness of the air, the shadows of the night, the mystery of the stars were putting her to sleep.

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Mike had forgotten all about her, until she suddenly fell against his side. He bent over, and for the first time felt an emotion of pity and tenderness for the orphan.

The littleness, the helplessness, the trustfulness of that tiny atom at his side, shook his big, Irish heart to its center. He took her up in his arms, kissed her cheek with his bearded lips and laid her against his heart where she slept like a bird in a nest upon a cliff, until they drove into the dooryard of Donovan's old rock castle.

When he bore her into the house and placed her in his wife's arms, he was repaid for his trouble—Mike was. For Bridget laid the sleeping babe on her ample bosom and gazed through salt tears into the serene countenance of the child, and then, shaken with sobs and calling her, "Kathleen Kathleen," she

kissed her and crooned over her until a solemn hush fell upon the group of giants who stood gazing at the scene.

And then the child awakened from her sleep and looked around upon this new-created world with frightened eyes.

Suppose you should wake in a world as much too big for you as was this for Dolly! Do you think your lips would not have quivered and your chin puckered as did hers?

Those mute signals of distress completed the awe of this Brobdingnagian ring of spectators, and they drew back while Bridget comforted her.

“Hush, Kathleen. Hush, Lamb! Don’t cry, me darlint. Ye’s are here in the arms of love—in arms that have ached with their imptiness for tin years! And sure, Lovey, ye’re the image of my Kathleen! What is your name, swateheart, tell your mother?”

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“My name ith Dolly ; but my papa called me Little Thaint Thunthine,” the child answered, reassured by this oceanic love.

“Little Saint Sunshine !

“ Little Saint Sunshine ! Holy shmoke !”

These and a half dozen other exclamations burst from the hirsute lips of the cloudy circle of giants revolving at a distance from this tiny luminary.

“Kape still, ye shpalpeens,” said Bridget, as the child shrank into her arms. “Your big voices shcare her. Lave her to me till I comfort her. Little Saint Sunshine ! Mother of God ! but you’ll prove that in this household. Come to me arms. Ah, ye’re bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty !”

And comfort her Bridget Donovan did—comforted her until the child’s heart warmed with love and joy.

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"I'm hungry," Dolly said at last.

"Hungry are ye and thirsty, darlint? Of course ye are. Well, sit ye down in your little chair. Come, Mike! Come, byes! Be good now and quiet. They're not bad, nor dangerous, Lovey, though they are big and homely. You shall have them all under your thumb, Lamb," Bridget said; and Mike and the boys saw a lost light come back to her face and felt that a long closed vein of humor had opened once more in her sad heart.

With an immense clatter of chairs, this king of Bashan and his family of giants drew up around the groaning table, Dolly sitting aghast at the noise, close under the protecting wing of Bridget.

If she had come to this scene with her appetite jaded and her digestive apparatus destroyed, and her nervous

system a wreck, she might have experienced an emotion of admiration and envy, as she saw these great, healthy animals sit down to their "feed"—father, mother, sons, and that tall, thin, pure-faced, silent, boyish Parson, who did not seem like the rest. She smiled at him as he quietly took his place beside her.

But Dolly's observations were confined by her necessary limitations to another realm. And what astonished her, was to see these strange beings no sooner seat themselves at the table, than with forks and knives brandished like swords and spears, they attacked the bacon, the "potaties," the chicken, the bread and everything else that loaded Bridget's bountiful table.

Here was something incomprehensible. This could not be harmonized with Little Saint Sunshine's philosophy at all. Never in her life had she seen

people break their bread without a "blessing."

She gazed from one to another, but particularly at Mike, with a look of utter incredulity—not criticism, not rebuke, but just incredulity.

With what little analytical power she possessed, she tried to solve this problem, but gave it up at last, and determined that although there might be reasons for omitting this sacred act for them, there could be none for her.

And so, without apology or conscious bravery, but with something very like a noble heroism after all, the little confessor folded her dimpled hands, bowed her golden head until the hair swept around it like the veil of a nun, and in a soft, inaudible voice, offered her thanks to God.

The effect produced by this simple act seemed out of all proportion to its

size. A thunderbolt or an earthquake could scarcely have startled these people more. They dropped their knives and forks and gazed at her in such awe as they might have felt had they come upon the Mother of God at her orisons.

The worst of the lot was Terry, whose friends declared that he had never known the fear of God or man, and whose love of fun was always betraying him. No sooner did he comprehend the nature of the act than he burst into a peal of laughter.

“Silence!” thundered Mike, bringing his fist down on the table until every dish rattled, his eyes blazing with that look of wrath which no child or man had ever yet faced without terror.

A hush like that of death fell on the group around the table and Dolly leaned close to Bridget.

“Mother,” said Mike, “the voice of

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prayer has never been heard at this table; but by the Eternal, if this child has prayer in her heart, neither Mike Donovan nor child of his shall quench it. Say that prayer out loud, Little Sunshine."

Dolly looked timidly into the eyes of Bridget, then, at the Parson who was gazing at her as if she were indeed a saint, then at Mike, then at the other boys, and last of all at Terry, whose face was red with shame; and bowing her head she lisped, in a voice that sounded like that of a song-sparrow:

*"God ith gweat and God ith good,
And we thank Him for thith food,
By Hith bounty all are fed,
Gwant uth, Lord, our daily bwead.*

Never in the history of the Donovans had a meal been eaten in such subdued silence as followed this petition. It

seemed to open the gates of a new and unknown world of thought and feeling to those wild children of nature.

Not a word would have been spoken perhaps, had not Dolly's own childish tongue been unloosed. She was hungry and her stomach was human, if her soul was angelic.

"Dath dood bwad and milk," she exclaimed, her lips yellow with cream and a drop trickling down her little chin.

"It's Jersey cream, child, and there be a dozen cows feeding in Donovan's own land for the family use. You can drink a pailful every meal, if you like it."

"I want thome more," said the hungry Little Saint.

"Give her more, Bridget! They've starved her," said Mike, angrily contrasting her tiny body with the frames of his colossal sons.

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Her tongue was fully unloosed after supper; and never in the whole of their lives had such an evening been passed by the Donovans. They gathered around her as though she were some natural curiosity; and at her childish ignorance and innocence, peals of laughter like those of the warriors of Odin would fill the old stone house.

At those terrific explosions, Dolly could only smile and begin again.

"I've dot thome Chrithmath prethenth for everybody in thith room and ith a thecret," she said at last, putting her fingers on her lips and looking around like a queen.

"Some what?" asked Mike.

"Thome Chrithmath prethenth."

"Christmas? Is to-day Christmas?"

"No! Thith ith Chrithmath Eve. Don't you know when Chrithmath comth?" she asked, looking up as if

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struck by a sudden fear as to the import of such ignorance.

“Well, bedad, I’d forgotten ! Hadn’t you, Bridget?”

A smile such as Mike had not seen for years spread over the countenance of his wife, and from it Dolly experienced a restoration of hope.

“Well, Thanty Klauth never forgeth,” she said, reviving her courage with a noble effort.

“No, he never forgets, darlint. But it’s time for children to be abed. Come, Lovey,” said Bridget.

“Dood night everybody,” she said, waving her hand from her lofty perch on Bridget’s arm.

Like the salute from an admiral’s gunboat, there came from the throats of the giants a broadside of “good nights.”

“What are we goin’ to do ’bout this, byes? ’Taint never goin’ to answer

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at all, at all, to let this child go over Christmas without something to remember it by," asked Mike, solemnly shaking his great head.

This problem confounded them utterly, for not one of them knew any more of the wants of a little girl than oxen would of the needs of sucking doves.

"I'll give her a twinty dollar gold piece to cut her teeth on, me ownself," said Mike.

"She's cut her teeth, I seen 'em," said Terry, who had now recovered his good nature.

"Well, I'll bore a hole through it for a locket," said Mike.

"I'll give her that colt that my Morgan mare foaled last spring," said Terry.

"Good bye, Terry. You've got a head on your shoulders," said Dan, "and I'll give her that little Jersey calf with a white star on its forehead."

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“And I’ll give her that little antelope that I’ve been nursing,” said Tim.

“Well, be gorra, I’ll give her six sheep,” exclaimed Patrick, not to be outdone.

“Bully byes,” said Mike proudly. “and now, Parson, what have you got?”

“There’s no candy in the house, is there?” he asked.

“Lordy! nor diamonds, nor rubies, nor emeralds,” exclaimed Mike sarcastically.

“Well then, I’m going to get some,” said the Parson rising.

“To get some candy?” asked his father incredulously.

“Where?” inquired Terry.

“There’s none this side of Buckville,” Danny said.

“That’s where I’m going,” Micky answered, moving toward the door.

“ To-night?”

“ To-night.”

“ It’s tin miles.”

“ What’s tin miles?”

“ It’s tin back.”

“ That’s only twinty.”

“ Bully bye,” exclaimed Mike, slapping the Parson on the back with a blow that nearly floored him.

Fathom the mind of a boy like that, you who can. Measure the hold that the sad story of the little orphan, the beauty of her face, the grace of her manners, the genuineness of her piety had taken on his heart. Pity and love no doubt sprang up together. A new sense of chivalry was born within him. Through her, child that she was, womanhood had received a new interpretation. It had been transfigured. He constituted himself her protector. He enshrined her

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in his bosom. He now had a little sister of his own, more beautiful, more adorable than any he had ever seen.

The long ride was nothing. The rhythmic sound of Whitefoot's hoofs beating the hard road and the cry of the coyotes in the distance were the only sounds he heard. The level floor of the prairie and the blue dome of the sky were all the sights he saw.

All blended harmoniously with the imaginations that thronged his soul: night, solitude, motion, thought, life, love, hope. He could not be unhappy nor lonely.

Even the way homeward did not seem long. There was the candy to think about and the trinkets he had bought of the old store-keeper whom he had routed out of bed. It made him laugh aloud to remember how scared and cross the old man was!

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How beautiful it was to hear that boyish laugh ring out upon the night air.

There was the light which his mother had left burning in the window. How short the ride had seemed!

He slipped the saddle from his steaming mare, rubbed her down, blanketed her, fed her, stole into the house on tip-toe, placed the precious box of candy on the chair where Bridget had hung two little crowded stockings, and lay down to dreamless sleep.



VI

*I*F there never had been a Christmas Day on earth before, the one which dawned on the Donovan household could scarcely have seemed newer or more wonderful.

Little Saint Sunshine had slept long and hard, but when, at last, she woke, the bursting stockings attracted her attention, and tumbling out of bed, she soon had the house in an uproar.

“I with you all a merry Chrithmath,” she said, and seizing the stockings in her arms she rushed out through the open door into the hall.

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In a few moments the entire family had gathered about the little white-robed figure, and were gazing at her as though she had dropped down upon them from the sky.

All her timidity had vanished. She danced about in glee. She poured her presents on the floor. She hugged them; she kissed them; she showed them first to one and then another.

For the first time in history, the Donovan family forgot its breakfast.

This was considered little short of a miracle, for the men usually were as restless as the cattle in their stalls when their fodder is not ready on time.

When at last they remembered this neglected duty and all sat down to the table, the child was too excited to eat; and it must be confessed that the men ate less than usual, for they were eager to show her their presents. And



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so, before they had really finished, old Mike himself mounted Dolly on his shoulder and they made a tour of the barn-yard and stables.

Nothing could exceed the astonishment and delight of the Little Saint, as from her lofty elevation she surveyed this new and wonderful world. The colt, the calf, the fawn, strange and fascinating as they were in themselves, assumed the most extraordinary value in her eyes when she comprehended that they were her own. To have them lick her hand, to stroke their flanks, to be placed upon the colt's back, were adventures like hunting elephants and lions in far away jungles.

It was long before her Titanic followers were tired of her pleasure, and fell off one by one to their daily duties. Then came the opportunity of the Little Parson, who had followed jealously at

her heels and who began to share with his mother the oversight of the little stranger. He spent the entire day showing her the wonders of this strange world into which she had fallen.

Such a day had never come into the life of Dolly before, so big with events, so crammed with excitement. What portentous spectacles must have floated before her imagination that night as Mama Donovan tucked her into her little crib and she tried to review those events and scenes! No doubt, animals more wonderful than ever entered the ark, horses with the tails of cows and the heads of sheep pranced and whinnied and snorted, as she gazed upon them in her dreams.

“Have yez had a happy Christmas, darlint?” asked Bridget, as she laid her down to sleep.

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“Thuch a happy day, and are you really my new mama?”

“Your new mama, darlint, and you’re my little Kathleen.”

“I am Little Thaint Thunthine.”

“Yis, Lovey. But yez must know that I lost a little girl about as old as you and you’re the living picture of her, wid your blue eyes and your long curly hair. And, oh darlint, my heart is full of love and happiness the night.”

The big blue eyes looked up wonderingly into those of the old, gray-haired woman and then slowly closed.

Bridget laid her down and clasped her hands over her like a young mother in her first ecstasy of love. While she waited there, the Parson tiptoed into the room and stood beside her.

“Oh, Micky,” she said, “ye’s have a little sister now.” He gazed shyly into

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the crib, and the sight of that fair face asleep on the pillow, the hands thrown over the head in matchless grace, the marvel of life in the embrace of sleep, the sister of death, subdued him. He stood a long time there as one who has seen a vision, and went out of the room without a word.



VII

*I*T would have been a study for a psychologist to watch the influence of the Little Saint on her environment, and the influence of her environment on the Little Saint, in the years that followed that Christmas Day.

A story, written by a witty and subtle Frenchman, exquisitely reveals the power of little things.

A German soldier, in the Franco-Prussian war, had appropriated a tiny Parisian clock and had taken it home with him.

His home was one of those solemn,

stately palaces that belong by nature to the Rhine. The father and mother, the brothers and sisters were all ponderous and slow. The furniture in the house was all antique and heavy. The servants all moved like glaciers; and an enormous timepiece on the stair with its loud "tick-tocks," coming not oftener than once in three or four seconds, and with its funeral knells that struck the hours, seemed to set the pace for the domestic life.

Upon a mantelpiece in this sedate and almost petrified household, the soldier placed his clock.

At first, its animated ticking and its dashing way of sounding forth the hours shocked the solemn inmates, and seemed to strike confusion to their souls.

But by and by, it began to exert a mild reformatory influence, and to their

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astonishment and horror, they all began to quicken their pace.

The servants fairly skipped to their work. The brothers and sisters went up and down stairs two steps at a time, while the father and mother, in spite of everything they could do, were actually seen to trot across the room.

It was in some such way as this that Little Saint Sunshine began to affect the moral and spiritual life of this Texan household.

To Bridget, she was like a draft from the fountain of life itself. All day long as she moved about her tasks the child followed her with prattle as ceaseless and sweet as the brook in the meadow.

The old feelings of loneliness and heart hunger vanished. The hours that had seemed so long while the men were off on the range, grew suddenly

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and mysteriously short. The old home that had seemed so gloomy and empty was filled with music and sunshine. The child she had lost was alive once more. Over and over again she called Dolly, "Kathleen."

The smile came back to her face; mirth lived again in her heart. She laughed as of yore.

Perhaps it was through Bridget that Little Saint Sunshine most influenced Donovan, for his heart became young again when he heard his good wife singing at her work and saw the light come back to her eye. But he learned to love the child for her own sake with a sweet, autumnal affection. He grew to expect her welcome at the door and felt something akin to terror if he did not see the little form there or at the window. It was a fair sight indeed to

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see her perched on his shoulder, her golden curls mingling with his long locks of fast whitening hair and beard, and to hear her silvery laughter chime with his big organ peals of joy. He grew soft to her pleadings and mellow to her touch. The old man, who was lord and master of a thousand acres of land and a score of hardy cowboys, was wax in the hands of this little orphan child. It was not easy to "make him over." He was rough and hard, but little drops of water and little rays of sunshine work wonderful transformations even in great granite blocks.

Nor could the "big byes" escape her magic influence. They too were of rigid and inflexible stuff. It took time, but they yielded. Softer speech was heard in the household. They were less often boisterous and reckless abroad.

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As for Micky—well, he did not need changing quite so much; but if ever there was a slave on earth, it was he.

Dolly herself did not escape reciprocal influence from these new friends.

Those strong natures, which bowed themselves to her gentle yoke and stooped to her as dromedaries stoop to their master, avenged themselves on that too ethereal substance which she had inherited from her ancestors. They gave their abounding life to her and gave it freely, exchanging strength for grace, for sweetness and light. It was as if a branch of a rare and delicate but depleted vine had been grafted upon a sturdy plant of the wilderness.

Other forces besides the people in her new home helped work this transformation.

There were the animals for example, into whose fraternity she was so freely

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admitted. They were everywhere. The earth teemed with them and "brought forth abundantly" as at the creation. Old Mike loved all living things and they sprang up under his fostering care in incredible numbers. Chickens and ducks and geese thronged the barnyard; horses and cattle and sheep covered the plains. Besides these domestic creatures, the wild ones played their part in her education. There were prairie dogs and rabbits and antelopes to be seen occasionally at a distance, and the air was full of birds. She made companions of them all. To be on terms of intimacy with all these children of the Great-all-Father, was second nature to Little Saint Sunshine. And then, there was the larger fellowship of the world itself, with its plains and rivers and forests all around, and the starry heavens above her. They, too, were like living things,

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and she felt their spirits mingle with her own.

Like a vast dome the blue sky rested upon the rim of the earth and she gazed into its depth with awe. Sometimes the hot sun breathed its fiery breath upon the plains and parched the grass. Sometimes the heavens wept their piteous tears and turned it green. Again they would cover it with a pure white mantle of new-fallen snow.

Now a gentle breeze bowed the heads of the grasses in the meadows and of the wheat in the fields and tossed the plumes of the corn. Now a wild norther, like a sudden blast from the nostrils of some angry divinity, flung the limbs of the trees in mad contortions, rattled the casements and covered the world with ice.

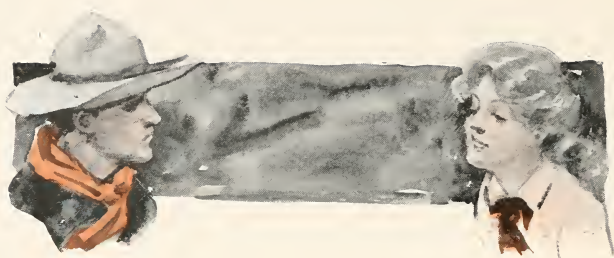
When Little Sunshine looked out of her windows and saw horses, and cows

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and sheep standing with tails to the storm, their heads hanging, their legs shivering, she pitied them all with her tender heart.

Surrounded by these potent influences, living her life among these kind people, giving and receiving love, ten years rolled past and Dolly grew into a sturdy, rosy, beautiful girl.

She could no longer be called *Little Saint Sunshine*; but sunshine she was still, as full of brightness and sweetness as the day when she came among them.



VIII

*D*URING those happy years, Micky had been the inseparable companion and true mentor of Little Saint Sunshine.

It was he who had taught her to love the out-of-door world and to care for the craft of the stock farmer.

He began her education with the art of horsemanship. She had been but a few days in the Donovan home before he had her in front of him on the pommel of his saddle. For a little while she clung to his neck and shook with fear, but the apprehension soon van-

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ished and she sat there with his strong arms about her as easily as in her little rocking chair. "You take to it like a duck to water," Micky said, and by springtime she could be seen riding by his side on a little pony which he had broken for her use.

He took her everywhere, as her strength, her skill and her appreciation grew : now to see them round up and brand the cattle ; now to see them wash and shear the sheep ; now to see the plowing, sowing and reaping in the fields.

Under his tutelage she learned to know the names of all the southern birds and flowers. Through his intuitive appreciation of the beautiful she grew sensitive to all those combinations of form and sound and color which thrill the human soul with an incomprehensible ecstasy, and then, surpassing her teacher

in his own domain, she led him into unexplored regions of thought and feeling.

By the time she was twelve, Dolly could throw a lariat around the front foot of a running horse. By the time she was thirteen, she could shoot a prairie chicken on the wing—she, the Little Saint Sunshine, who had been so frightened by the firecracker.

What a comradeship was this! Into what a beautiful and sacred intimacy must two such souls have grown—this tall, awkward, earnest, romantic youth of twenty-five and this sunny, open, bewitching, adorable girl of fifteen!

Dolly had never dreamed of Micky as anything else than a big, beloved brother, whom she worshiped with an unquestioning devotion. She had sat upon his knee, had thrown her arms about his neck, had kissed him with all

the freedom of true sisterhood. So long had she been an inmate of this home, so far back in the dim past was the one in which she had been born, so vague were the memories of her parents, that she never had a disturbing consciousness of the unreality of these relationships which had been formed within the walls of the great stone house. She knew, but she could not realize, that Mike and Bridget were not her real father and mother, and that these big men, who loved her so, were not her real brothers.

But with Micky it was different.

For years he had been growing conscious of a strange, deep, sweet and indescribable feeling toward this orphan girl. Now that he had reached manhood and could analyze this feeling, he could see that it had begun far back in his childhood; perhaps, with the first

sight of her face when he cast that shy glance at her in the old two-seated wagon at the station.

At any rate, he could not remember when she did not seem to him something a little more than human. But for a year or more, since she was fourteen or fifteen, perhaps since she had grown so strangely beautiful and so wonderfully mature for her age, it had become clear to his mind that the love he bore her was not the love of a brother.

This discovery produced a profound effect upon him. He became more shy. He treated her with a different sort of respect and consideration. He trembled when she even touched him.

Delicious as were the emotions produced in his heart by knowing that he loved her thus, they were not unmingled with pain. For did he not see that of such a situation Dolly had not yet

dreamed? How could he break this news to her? How could he change that sisterly devotion to a lover's passion?

With these problems he wrestled day and night. The more he struggled with them, the more insolvable they became, and he grew restless and even melancholy. Dolly could not "make him out," in these new moods. The more distant he became, the more tender and intimate she grew and the more hopeless the situation became for him. He knew that sometime his secret would escape. It was impossible to preserve it always.

And so it happened one day in the fall of Dolly's sixteenth year. They had gone quail hunting. Mounted as usual, she on a beautiful sorrel pony, he on a great bay horse, their shotguns slung on the saddles, their ammunition strapped

round their waists, the two Irish setters mad with delight and gamboling at their sides, they galloped away to a distant wheat-field on old Donovan's ever-expanding ranch.

The harvests had all been reaped and the stubble was bristling in the fields. The corn still stood in the shocks, waiting to be husked. Away in the distance they could see innumerable cattle grazing on the plains. On every side the level prairie stretched away to what seemed to them infinity. Over them like a great blue tent, its edges pinned to the round horizon, stretched a cloudless sky. An autumn haze was in the air. Autumn colors were in the trees. The world reposed in that inscrutable mystery which those Indian summer days threw over it like a mantle.

"How sweet it is to be alive!" cried Dolly suddenly, dropping her bridle,

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throwing her arms wide apart, filling her lungs with the sweet air and turning a face radiant with health and happiness and love to Micky.

It was almost too much for him. But he held his peace and smiled down at her with one of those calm smiles that was not unlike the expression upon the face of the world.

“Let’s race!” she cried—and at the word, the pony, catching his mistress’ lightest thought, seemed suddenly to take wings. The unfenced prairie lay before them, boundless as the sea.

She had taken the long-limbed horse of her lover unawares, and the first few plunges gave her what seemed a fatal lead. But the noble bay was game, and without a word from his master leaped to the trial. There are few sensations more thrilling than a race on a Texas prairie without a fence in sight, with

jack-rabbits bounding and the blue grouse flying from beneath your horse's feet; the earth itself appearing to rush away from under you, the muscles of the straining horses thrilling your heart, and the joy of contest running in your veins.

It was a wild, fair race. The horses were evenly matched for speed; but the old bay had the wind. At the end of a mile he overtook the sorrel mare and Micky laid his hand upon the arm of her mistress.

"You've won!" she cried.

"I wish I had," he said, and smiled enigmatically.

"You have," she replied.

"I will," he answered and shook back his red hair from his high brow.

Dolly was puzzled, as she had often been of late. But they had reached the wheat-field by this time, and dismount-

ing, they staked their horses out and began to hunt.

The dogs were nobly bred and thoroughly trained. They scoured the prairies far and wide and raced through the stubble-field, master and mistress following.

There was not an element in this sport to which the hunters were not keenly sensitive; but the grace of the dogs, their ardor, the music of their baying, the rigid inflexible attitude of the "stand"—these, with the beauty of the world and the utter freedom of life were what most affected Dolly.

This was the third or fourth time they had been out this fall, and she had reluctantly admitted to herself that an element of pain had somehow entered into the sport. She had never until this season suffered over the death of the birds. On Donovan's ranch, death

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was second nature. She had grown up in an atmosphere of the sacrificial destruction of animal life and had never questioned its justice.

But to-day, perhaps because of the mysterious transition into womanhood through which she was passing, she felt that she was growing sensitive to suffering. And so, thrilled with that strong sense of the joy of life to which she had given expression to Micky, the sudden death of the beautiful bobwhites took a powerful hold upon her heart and conscience.

This feeling seemed unworthy, weak and cowardly in the presence of the big man at her side, and so, when the first covey went up, she covered a couple of birds with her gun and dropped them in the stubble.

One was dead, but the other one was only wounded; and when the brown

Irish setter brought it to her, wagging his tail with pride for his own exploit and honor for hers, and laid it at her feet, she picked it up with a hand that trembled.

The little creature fluttered feebly, gasped once or twice, turned its innocent eyes up to her as though utterly astonished that a face so beautiful could be so cruel—and died.

With a sudden, uncontrollable instinct, Dolly sank upon the ground, pressed the little creature to her heart and burst into tears.

“What’s the matter?” Micky asked in alarm, and hurried to her side.

When he reached her she was sobbing quietly.

With a quick instinct he divined the nature of her grief and waited until it had spent itself and she had risen to her feet.

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“I can never do it again,” she said, holding the dead quail in her hand, its blood on her fingers, its head drooping and its wings outspread.

And then she looked up into Micky’s face. Her eyes were still full of tears. There was a look of exquisite penitence and compassion on her young face that almost inspired him with awe.

“It is a cruel sport, Micky; don’t you think so?” she asked.

He did not reply, but stood silently contemplating her.

“*Don’t* you?” she said, insisting upon an answer.

“I was not thinking of the bird,” he replied.

“Of what were you thinking?”

“Of you.”

“What were you thinking of me?”

“How beautiful you are and how much I love you.”



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Something in his face, his manner, his tone, startled her, but she did not divine his meaning, and replied:

“And I love you, Micky.”

“But I do not love you as a brother. It is as a lover,” he said solemnly.

It came to her with an overpowering suddenness. She stood as one struck dumb, laying the bird instinctively on her heart, covering it with both hands and looking into his eyes spellbound.

“You are surprised?” he asked quietly.

She was still speechless.

“Had you never thought of it?” he asked.

“Never,” she replied.

“You know that we are not really brother and sister?”

“Yes.”

“What more natural than that I should love you as I do? I could not

help it, Dolly. Really, I could not. I suppose it comes to you as a great shock. I am sorry to disturb your peace. But you are fast getting to be a woman, as I am already a man, and sooner or later you would have to learn my secret. I have told it now; and it is a great relief. I know that you are bewildered by it. You will need time to think about it. I will give you time enough. I shall say nothing more for a long while. But I was so afraid that you would think of me as a brother only and give your heart to some one else. I could not take that chance, Dolly, could I? And so I have told you in order that you should know, when any one comes to woo you, that Micky Donovan has loved you for years; that he loves you now; that he will love you always.”

“Oh, Micky! Micky! I have lost a brother,” she cried.

“But you have found a lover,” he said.

A look of sadness appeared on her face. She shook her head gravely and replied, “I do not understand that. I think I am too young. It is all so strange. I can not make anything of it. I want to go home. Take me home, Micky,” she pleaded.

They turned silently in the direction of the horses. The dogs, that were standing like bronze statues before a covey of birds, watched them out of the corner of their eyes but did not stir.

They mounted their horses and rode slowly homeward.

After a long time the dogs appeared, trotting sullenly after them.

Something had happened which was beyond their comprehension.



IX

*I*T seemed to Dolly, as she rode quietly and humbly by the side of her lover that autumn afternoon, as though she could never recover from this shock, never be herself again, never smile and never feel in his presence anything but the same timidity which she experienced then.

But she did not know her own heart. It was every inch a woman's heart, subtle, coquettish, tyrannical. Not that the goodness and truth and light which led them to call her Little Saint Sunshine had disappeared or ever could.

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But the undeveloped germs of that indestructible instinct—the instinct that had led her when she was five years old to toy with the heart of the old vice-president of the Texas and Pacific Railroad—had unfolded.

She grew accustomed to the new situation quite easily, and before long learned to like the idea of having her big lover so completely under her mastery. There was an irresistible fascination in toying with him as a cat plays with a mouse. She did not know how he felt. How could she? It seemed absurd to see him draw those long faces and act hurt at nothing at all.

Her whole attitude toward him underwent a change, and sometimes it seemed to him that her very nature had been altered. There were times when he grew quite frantic and desperate. She would be all ardor and devotion

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for an instant, and then would flout him to his face, would run when he came near, refuse his little presents and scorn his tender advances.

“You do not love me any more, Dolly,” he said to her one evening when she had refused to walk with him over to the edge of the river and watch the sun go down.

“I love you like a sister, but I do not want you to be always making those big eyes at me and trying to act as though you owned me like one of the ponies you have branded,” she said with a pout of her pretty lips.

* * * * *

The next few years moved very swiftly to her, but very slowly to him.

She became more womanly day by day, but not more considerate of Micky, who was bearing about in his bosom a slow, consuming fire.

A young school-teacher with a high white forehead, delicate hands and a world of book-learning too subtle and deep for Micky, had been brought by some infernal fate, as he thought, into a village that had been built on the line of a new railroad, and Dolly had become his pupil.

That which had happened to cowboys innumerable had also happened to the school-master. He had seen this incarnation of health, of happiness, of virtue, of womanly grace and strength and had fallen helplessly at her feet.

For the first time in her care-free, joyous life, Dolly had really thought of love. The bravest, the strongest, the richest ranchmen had striven in vain to rouse the sacred fire in her bosom. She had laughed at their sufferings, and sent them back to their lonely cabins on the prairie or to their pistols and their drink.

But the school-teacher with his white forehead, little hand and inexhaustible learning! Ah! he was so different from the awkward and violent cowboys. He was like the lovers she had read about in her books; and when, unconscious of Micky's rage, he helped to place Dolly on her horse, or led it by the bridle as he walked by her side, or rode over to Donovan's castle Sunday afternoons, Dolly dreamed a little dream of love.

Micky's rage? Yes, the gentle Micky had become sullen and ugly. He was no more worthy to be called a Parson. The minute the school-teacher came in sight there was a dangerous look in his eyes, and he would mount the largest horse on the place and would go tearing madly across the prairies. He had stood it as long as he could, poor fellow. Such things get beyond endur-

ance, and particularly the endurance of great bold souls like Micky's when they happen to be in bodies that measure six feet three in their socks and weigh two hundred pounds.

And so, one day after the schoolmaster had gone, he said something to Dolly which startled and sobered her. She permitted him to lead her unresistingly out to the high bluff over the river whither he always went in the best and worst moments of his now tumultuous life.

He wore his cowboy suit of leather breeches, high-topped boots with jingling spurs and big sombrero—as if to mock the broadcloth of the scholar. His red-brown hair hung loose over his shoulders, a beard like his father's had grown on his leonine face. There was a look in his deep-set, blue eyes as unfathomable as that in the sky above.

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Dolly was taller than the average woman. Her figure was erect, her carriage noble, her features beautiful. She had learned to dress with taste. The consciousness that she was admired and loved had given her a quiet and admirable self-confidence.

She had never before shrunk from any experience with a man. But there was something so severe, so stern, so serious about Micky this afternoon that she felt a sort of awe of him.

And so, resenting this emotion as something unworthy of herself, she resisted it stoutly and carried her head too high, set her jaws a little too firmly, looked a little too fixedly away from her companion and off into the distance. Not a word was spoken until they reached the rock, nor then, until they had been sitting in silence for a time, seeing neither the swift waters, nor the gorgeous

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sunset, nor the advancing shadows ; hearing neither the roar of the waterfall, the cawing of the crows, nor the whispering of the leaves.

At last the silence was broken by Micky.

“Dolly, I have brought you out here to ask you two or three questions. I am a man of few words and will be brief. Will you answer me frank and true?”

She raised her round chin a little higher and looked off into the distance still farther.

“Do you love that school-teacher?” he asked, suppressing a tidal wave of wrath.

“What right have you to ask, Mike Donovan?” she replied, suddenly facing him with flashing eyes.

“This right,” he cried, rising to his full height. “I have told you for two years that I loved you and meant to

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marry you. Never have I drawn a breath that did not bless you. Never have I had a dream that you were not the angel of. To see you look at that school-master as you do, is like driving knives into my heart. If you love him, I want you to marry him, for, wayward and wicked as I am, I had rather be torn by wild horses than that you should miss your happiness in life; but if you *do* love him, this is no place for me. I am going away. This is why I ask you. Do you love him, Dolly?"

"It is a question no man but himself has a right to ask me," she answered, rigid and cold and hard.

"I've said my say. Come! let us be going. The range will be clear for him by night. It's hard, by Heaven, it's hard!"

He turned his face toward home and she walked by his side. Not once did

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they look at each other. Not once did they speak.

That night without saying a word of farewell, Micky rode to El Paso and enlisted in the regiment of Rough Riders which was just then being recruited for the Spanish war.



X

*T*HERE are two experiences which come into every human life—disillusionment, in which the fictitious hopes and fancies of the soul vanish like the unsubstantial fabric of a dream ; disclosure, in which the hidden convictions and desires of the soul are brought suddenly into view.

They are equally startling. In either can originate the beginning of our ascent into the sublimities or of our descent into the abyssms of life.

When Dolly found that Micky had gone, the veil that hid the secrets of her

heart was suddenly torn away. Even the anger she desired to cherish because he had put his question so clumsily dissolved into tears. She blamed herself and herself only, although it had been physically and therefore mentally impossible for her to know her own heart. She was too young, too inexperienced. How could she tell whether she loved him, without testing her affections on another and thus finding a basis of comparison? How could she distinguish the love she felt for this young Benjamin of Donovan's many sons from that she bore his brothers?

No matter. She castigated herself both night and day. She never remembered to have hated any object in the world before; but it now seemed to her tender and bleeding heart, that if the school-teacher should cross her path she would crush him like a snake.

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How could she endure her trouble? But there was no one to tell it to. Dear as her foster-mother was, kind and sympathetic—it was impossible to communicate her grief to that tender heart. She must bear it alone. She would bear it bravely. Her sorrow should not darken this household. She would still remain its sunshine.

And she did. Never in all her life had they seen her so gentle, so brave, so full of hope and cheer. Not one of them, not even Mother Donovan, now grown gray and genial; not even old Mike, who was ripening like an apple in a sunny garden; not even the brothers, who, though they were all married now, still loved her almost as much as they did their wives, ever for an instant suspected her secret.

You may say what you will about wounds got in battle and suffering borne

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in hospitals; but they are nothing to those sacred griefs so nobly hidden in the depths of the soul.

Even Micky's wound, which he got on the slopes of San Juan Hill, was not so painful. A terrible telegram fell like a bombshell into Donovan's castle the next day after that bloody battle. It had been sent by a neighbor's son with whom Micky had gone to the war.

"Micky is wounded, we fear fatally. He was shot while nobly exposing himself to danger. He is delirious and constantly calling for Dolly. Can't she come?" TOM."

"Can't she *come*?"

Ah, you shall see!

There were thirty minutes before the through train would leave the station at Buckville, ten miles away.

"Pack my trunk and forward it," said she, turning to Bridget. "Go and sad-

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dle Ranger," she cried to Mike in a voice that he did not dare resist, though Ranger was a stallion that had never been ridden by mortal man save his master, Micky.

It took two men to hold him, and old Mike himself, trembling like a reed, hoisted her into the saddle.

"Let him go!" she cried.

Like a projectile from a Krupp gun he shot out of the barn-yard, but they noticed that his step was steady to the hand that held the bridle.

"Good by!" she cried, turning in her saddle.

"God bless you, darlint," called Bridget with her hands clasped to Heaven, while old Mike stood silent, with the big tears running down his cheeks.

Once out on the open prairie and beyond hearing, she leaned over the neck of the stallion and stroked his mane.

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"It's all for Micky, Ranger," she said, "and it's the race of your life."

He seemed to comprehend.

Steadying himself to his work, he laid his head low and ran. The people who lived along the road had seen horses run before, but none like that.

"For Micky! For Micky! For Micky," echoed the hoofs of the horse as he spurned the ground.

She held her watch in her hand. Five minutes, ten, twenty had gone and not a break in that terrible pace! "Good boy! Good Ranger!" she said and stroked his mane again. By the familiar marks of the roadside, she knew that she could make it if the horse could hold his speed. Five minutes more and still he ran without the flagging of a step.

The prairie was level as a floor and now, away off in the distance, she saw a moving speck.

“It’s the train, Ranger. If it beats you I shall lose twenty-four hours. Go, go, go!” she cried. If he had run before, he flew now. It was horse flesh against wrought iron; it was love against steam. They were going at right angles toward each other, the train and the horse. “Oh, if that engineer only knew,” cried Dolly in agony, as she passed the last mile post and saw that the train was scarcely farther away from the station than she. He did not *need* to know, for Ranger knew—and that was enough. The rods seemed leagues; the feet rods.

Suddenly she saw a puff of steam, then heard a whistle. The train was slowing for the stop! It had stopped! There was a turn to the depot and a house between her and the eyes of the engineer.

“Oh Ranger, go!” she cried once more.

With one wild bound he closed his race; and, lying flat and low on his neck as he turned the corner to keep from being thrown into space, she loosened her skirts, dropped to the ground and caught the railing of the platform of the last car as it pulled out of the station.

Poor Ranger! He never recovered from that race. She saw him stand with his feet spread out, his head hanging, his nostrils bloody, the foam dropping from his flanks, and his sides panting like a tired dog's.

She threw him a kiss. It was all she could do, and there were men who saw it who would have done what Ranger did—for that same reward.

It was a long and wearying journey. At the first station she telegraphed

Tom to send her despatches daily, and the passengers on the sleeper came to know when they were due, by the agitation of the beautiful but silent girl.

They saw the varying shades of her grief or hope as the messages told of the ebb and the rise of the fever.

They proffered their sympathy and their aid; but what could they do? She told them she was going to the bed-side of a wounded soldier; but that was all.

Her grief was too sacred. It was incommunicable. No other soul should share it with her.

“Oh, if I only had Ranger!” she would say to herself a dozen times a day, longing for some way to increase her speed, to annihilate distance.

The day before she reached the harbor where she hoped to find a boat for Santiago, the symptoms were terribly alarming. Three despatches came that

day. The passengers gazed with sympathetic wonder as that beautiful face grew ashen after every one.

At Tampa, she found the boat ready for its journey. She had scarcely gone aboard before they slipped the cables and put to sea. She could hear nothing more now for many hours, and retiring to her berth she composed herself to sleep in order to get her strength for the struggle with death on the morrow.

She had need of it. The strain had been terrible, but those thirteen years of happy, healthy life on the prairie were telling now.

She sank into a sleep so dreamless that it was like a stupor. But when she woke she rose fresh and strong for her battle with the king of terrors.

Tom was on the wharf, good, old Tom—she could have hugged him.

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"Oh, Tom, how is he?" she cried, her soul in her great blue eyes.

"The crisis comes to-night," he said, his honest face as tender as a mother's.

"Then he is still *alive*! Thank God!" she said, clasping her hands.

"Yes, he is still alive, with a fighting chance."

"I am here to take it! Where is he?" she cried.

"This way," he said.

The drive to the hospital seemed interminable; but it gave her time to learn all she needed to know and to acquire as much knowledge of the case as the faithful fellow could impart.

"Here we are," he said in a solemn voice.

And then Dolly's heart began to beat so painfully that she put her hands upon her bosom to still it.

It was but a momentary weakness.

Her disciplined will triumphed, and when she walked down the aisle between the cots, she might have been taken for one of the trained nurses—save for a look of uncontrollable anxiety on her face.

She needed no one to pilot her. Instinct took her straight to the iron cot where Micky lay.

Oh, it was pitiful! So wan, so white, so wasted was he. What had become of the great body? Where had the tan gone? How fine those features were, now that she saw them stripped of their color and their flesh!

She stooped over him, kissed the cold forehead, smiled when he opened his eyes and looked vacantly up into her face. But her heart stopped beating with a sickening sense of helplessness, when she saw that he did not know her; then she addressed herself to her task.

Young as she was, they gave her the

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place that was hers by right; and soon they were all under the spell of her irresistible attraction. They helped her fight her battle, and she won.

Yes, with God's help and theirs and the might of that iron frame on the iron cot, she won.

It was at the close of a day of the most painful apprehensions, when hope and fear hung in a long equilibrium, that, just as the sun was going down and the hush of evening was on the world, Micky opened his eyes and roused into consciousness.

It took his staggered senses a moment or two to adjust themselves to this strange environment. He raised his head and gazed bewilderedly about. What great room was this? Why were there so many beds in it? Who were those men sitting bolstered against their

pillows? Who were those women in white caps and aprons? Who was this one without? Had he been shot, and was he in Heaven, and was she an angel? She looked like Dolly. Are all angels like Dolly? It *is* Dolly! "*Dolly!*" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Micky, darling."

"Where did you come from?"

"From home, lad."

"What did you come for?"

"To save your dear life, Micky, and nurse you back to health."

"What difference does it make? You had better let me die. I tried hard enough," he said bitterly, as the past rushed back into memory.

"It is different now, Micky," she cried pathetically.

"Different? How?" he asked, with a look that searched her soul.

“Hush, Micky, hush! You are too weak to talk,” she said, and with that, bent over and kissed his lips.

“Is that a sister’s kiss or a sweetheart’s, Micky?” she asked with a smile and a blush that sent his heart bounding.

Two great tears welled from the depths of his blue eyes, his chin quivered, he put up his big white hands, took her face between them, looked long into her very soul and said: “It was the kiss that I would have died for, Dolly.”

“It shall not cost you that, Micky,” she said and pressed another on his lips.

“Let me go to sleep now. I’ve nothing more to ask,” he said, and gazing up into her face with a look of adoration and of peace, he sank into a dreamless sleep.

After he was well enough to travel, she took him home.

“When shall we be married?” he asked her a hundred times or more on the way, and her answer was always the same: “Not until Christmas, Micky.”

He pleaded hard, but in vain, for an earlier day.

“No, lad,” she said, “Christmas is the best day of my life. On Christmas I was born. On Christmas I came to your mother’s home. On Christmas Eve you rode twenty miles to buy me a present. I have never forgotten it, Micky, I never shall. No. It must not be a day sooner. This is the best day of the year and of my life. On the best day we shall do the best deed.”

Ah! there were great goings-on at Donovan’s castle when they married old Mike’s Benjamin to Bridget’s Little Saint Sunshine!

There was not a cowboy for fifty miles around who did not come in his

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best buckskin breeches and high-heeled boots to dance with Dolly.

And there was not one of them who did not have the chance. Nothing could tire her! She danced like the sunshine on the waters, like the tassels on the corn, and every word of hers made the world seem a better place to live in, to those wild fellows of the plains.

And while every man of them wished he had her for his own, none of them begrudged her to the Little Parson! Not a man of them but loved him; not a man but was proud of him, since his great deed of bravery at San Juan Hill.

It was the last drop in the Donovan cup of happiness.

"She's mine now, Mike, for good and all," said Bridget.

"'Twas a blisssed day when she shteppted her foot across this threshold,





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darlint," said old Mike, clawing a tear from his eye with his big thumb.

Just at that very moment, Dolly came tripping across the room, threw her arms around the old man and kissed him through his snow-white beard.

"Come, Papa Donovan! If you will not ask me to dance, I shall ask you, for dance you must at the wedding of your own Little Saint Sunshine."

"'Tis Winter in the arms of Spring," says old Mike gallantly, and the floor shook to his tread.

The last half-hour before the wedding journey was spent in Bridget's room.

"You've been more than a mother to a poor little orphan," sobbed Dolly, clinging to her neck.

"And you've been more than a daughter to a lonely old woman," said Bridget, folding her in her arms.



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